

Online bullying of female politicians linked to Young Nat's house

A campaign of misogynistic online trolling against left-wing female politicians originated from a house owned by a Young Nat and community board hopeful.

However, Bryce Beattie, the account holder behind an IP address used to create a fake social media account targeting at least three women politicians, denies any involvement or knowledge in the harassment.

Beattie, a 26-year-old IT business development manager who lives in Christchurch, accepts this activity must have occurred from his property, but said he has had numerous flatmates over the past 12 months, and he lives with two other people at the moment. One of those flatmates is also understood to be a Young Nat.

"This is the first I have heard about this," Beattie said when approached by *Stuff* on Wednesday.

CHRIS SKELTON/*Stuff*

Cr Sara Templeton has taken a stand against online bullying after a fake social media account was used to troll her and other female politicians.

"I have got a few flatmates, I'm not going to pin anything on anyone."

In a statement later in the day, Beattie said he was requesting more information from Netsafe so he could determine whether he needed to talk to current or previous flatmates.

Beattie said he had been on the receiving end of a targeted bullying campaign in the past, and it was not a pleasant experience.

A fake social media account, which originated from Beattie's house, under the false name of Hamish Eggstein, was used to target female politicians, including Christchurch city councillor Sara Templeton, Cabinet minister and Wigram MP Megan Woods and Ilam [Labour MP Sarah Pallett](#).

The Eggstein profile, which used a fake photograph, asked Templeton if the menstrual products she used were eco-friendly and would save the Earth.

She was also subjected to dozens of inappropriate comments and messages from that profile, which was set up in December 2020 and was only taken down once Templeton went public about the abuse last July.

The profile tagged Woods to ask her how much in royalties she was receiving for letting a pork crackling company use her likeness. The packet had a picture of a pig on the front of it.

Young Nat Bryce Beattie says he has nothing to do with the online bullying.

All three women blocked the profile from their social media pages, but then the Eggstein profile started making comments about Templeton on other people's social media posts, including those of fellow councillors.

An official information request was made by Eggstein to the council to get access to Templeton's Facebook page posts.

Beattie was revealed as the holder of the household IP address after Templeton successfully made an application to the district court under the Harmful Digital Communications Act.

The court ordered Facebook to release information it held on the Eggstein profile, and it sent the court an IP address.

The court then ordered the telecommunications company linked to the IP address to release the details of the account holder. Beattie's details were then revealed to Templeton via the court.

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Beattie is standing for a Christchurch City Council community board in the Hornby ward. He has denied any involvement or knowledge in the online bullying.

Templeton, [who publicly called out online bullies last year](#), said she made the application to draw attention to the wider culture of harassment, misinformation and misogyny she

said was prevalent in politics.

She also wanted to show others who have suffered online abuse there is a path that can be followed to identify those behind fake accounts.

“It takes time and the results aren’t guaranteed, but it is free, impartial and can be done without a lawyer.”

She also hoped the threat of being unmasked would deter bullies.



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The fake profile of “Hamish Eggstein” conducted a sustained harassment campaign against Sara Templeton.

One of the hardest parts of the process was admitting the impact the harassment had on her.

“I struggled to focus in meetings and missed several. I used sleeping pills to get some sleep and stopped my usual online communication with the community for a time.”

People have also accused Templeton of not having a thick enough skin for the job, but she believes that is an easy thing to say for people who have not been subject to such attacks.

“I've also heard that ‘it just goes with the job’, but it shouldn’t.

“Putting your hand up to represent your community around

the council table shouldn't automatically lead to personal attacks and if that were the case, then male politicians would be subject to the same level of abuse, and that's clearly not the case."

Templeton said she was worried going public with her experience could lead to some wanting retribution, and she hoped people would contact her if they saw anything.

A fake photograph was used on the Hamish Eggstein account.

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A fake photograph was used on the Hamish Eggstein account.

Netsafe online safety operations manager Sean Lyons said multiple devices could be linked to a single IP address.

He said the situation was a weakness in the unmasking rule.

Lyons was not able to comment on the specific case, but said the account holder was usually the person that paid the bills.

Both Woods and Pallett have praised Templeton for her work to expose bullies.

Woods said online attacks on women politicians were "ongoing, targeted and toxic", but unfortunately she had become all too used to it.

"I do have a concern that this kind of vile, toxic behaviour puts young women off politics. Unfortunately too much of

this behaviour online has been normalised.”

Pallett said Templeton was brave to take the action.

“It takes a lot of courage to step forward and do what she has done. We need to be able to safely challenge this sort of behaviour online in a way that does not draw further attention.”

Online bullies who hid behind false profiles needed to see there were consequences for their actions, Pallett said.

“It’s really important that we keep listening to people that disagree with us, but there is a line, and they crossed it.”

Professor [Bronwyn Hayward](#), a University of Canterbury political scientist, was also concerned about the impact misogyny in public life was having on democracy.

She said there was a reluctance from women to stand for public office.

“It silences women’s voices and makes it more difficult for women to engage in public life. It’s a real problem.”

Hayward said it was particularly bad for women of ethnic minorities.

Te Pūnaha Matatini principal investigator Kate Hannah, [who has been researching disinformation](#), said there had been an exponential growth of highly misogynistic and vulgar language about women on social media in New Zealand.

She was seeing the normalisation of extreme misogynistic behaviour on social media, targeted towards women who were stepping outside traditional roles – high profile women politicians, experts and women in the media.

Hannah said “grotesque and violent misogynistic behaviour” was now across mainstream social media.

“We need a grassroots campaign to support women who are in the public eye.”